

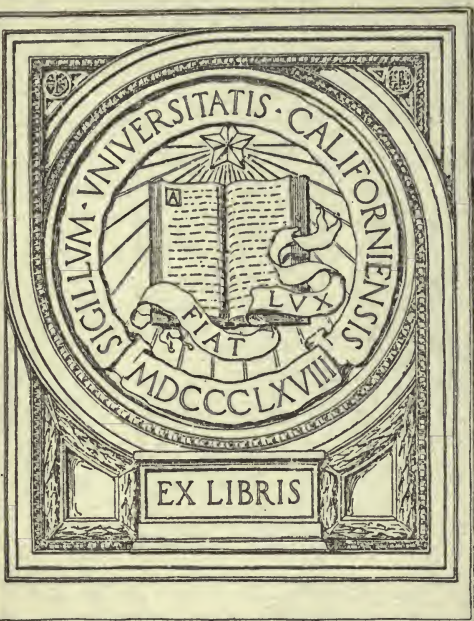
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SUGGESTIONS FOR A PRESIDENTIAL
MESSAGE

BY
CHARLES E. CHAPMAN

REPRINTED FROM POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY
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IN August, 1920, the writer attended a "*velada*" in Santiago, Chile, in honor of a Chilean student who was being sent to Oxford. The affair was the event of the day in that city, and the great Municipal Theatre was filled almost to the point of overflowing. On the stage, among the speakers, were some of the most distinguished men in Chile, as well as the British minister and other diplomatic representatives. Naturally, the keynote of the speeches was "the traditional friendship of England and Chile". More than one speaker took occasion to point out that never in their national history had the Chileans had any reason to fear a British policy of "imperialism".

The above is merely a single instance of what one hears many times, not only in Chile but also in other parts of Hispanic America. "Of course the Hispanic American republics have had no occasion to be afraid of England or any other European power", we may tell ourselves, "because they have been protected by the Monroe Doctrine".

The statement will bear investigation. If the Hispanic American *republics* have been free from aggressions, their predecessors, the Spanish and Portuguese empires, were not. Take, for example, the case of England. The history of English colonization in the Western Hemisphere is made up largely of encroachments on the Spanish domain. From Virginia to Florida there were once Spanish establishments which were supplanted by the English. Jamaica, Trinidad, and the regions now called British Guiana and British Honduras were filched from Spain. England pressed back the Spanish claims along

¹In accordance with their general policy, the editors disclaim all responsibility for the proposals put forth by contributors. The author of the present article, Dr. Chapman, is Associate Professor of Hispanic American History in the University of California, and was recently United States Exchange Professor to Chile.—ED.

the Pacific coast. If more was not taken it was due, not to a lack of effort, but to lack of success. Twice in the opening years of the nineteenth century England sent trained armies to the Río de la Plata to conquer the great region now embraced by Argentina and Uruguay, but her troops were defeated. There followed a few years of abstention, when England was an ally of Spain in Europe, and then in 1823 there came the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine, not an English-sponsored "Canning Doctrine" as has so often erroneously been stated, but a Doctrine which Canning himself received with no little displeasure when he saw the terms in which it was couched.

European expansion in the Americas was blocked, unless the overseas governments were willing to risk a conflict with the United States—but it was not blocked elsewhere. Let anybody compare a map of the world in 1823 with a world map of to-day! In 1823 Western European possessions in Africa were limited to a few scant strips of coast and the settlements at the Cape. Today Africa is a splash of colors representing the holdings of England, France and Italy, with minor tidbits to lesser powers. Liberia alone stands free. Look at Asia—and the same thing will be observed to have taken place. Where, for example, are Afghanistan and Beluchistan, which but a few years ago used to grace our maps as independent entities? But the detail of European conquest in Asia during the past hundred years is long and tedious. Look also at Oceanica and the South Pacific. There too the wave of European imperialism flowed in. Even in Europe itself there have been "readjustments" of frontiers and changes of flag, especially in the eastern Mediterranean. In other words, everywhere in the world, *except in the Americas*, the years since 1823 have been one of the greatest epochs of European conquest that history records.

The writer sets this forth in no sense of accusation. He recognizes, for example, that there have been British statesmen who could say "Perish India!", bewailing the fact of the British Empire. He recently talked with an Englishman who in all sincerity "lamented the necessity" of England's taking possession of Mesopotamia, though he was convinced that it was "England's duty to mankind" to do so. But India did not

perish; it grew. And the valuable oil fields of Mesopotamia are commonly understood to have been appropriated to the almost exclusive use of England. Nothing of that sort has happened in the Americas. Is it reasonable to deny that the Monroe Doctrine has been largely responsible?

The discussion may be brought back to the point of starting. Due to the restraint imposed upon them by the Monroe Doctrine, the European powers have obtained a reputation in Hispanic America that they do not deserve. And so too has the United States, but in this case it is a horse of another color. Too frequently the Monroe Doctrine is looked upon as an instrument for conquests by the United States, under the pretense of protecting the Hispanic American republics from their European friends, "who have never done them any harm". All too often our European trade rivals do what they can to foster this ungenerous view.

The evil of this situation is that the Monroe Doctrine is proving a bonanza for European trade and a boomerang for ours. A European who was not an imperialist might well drink long life to the Monroe Doctrine. But has anybody ever read a word of commendation for it among English, French, or German writings? Certainly not often, if at all. Europeans do not like it, though it helps them so long as they confine their wishes to trade and investment.

Come now to the next question. Is there any reason why we should assist European business, to the detriment of our own? In other words, is the Monroe Doctrine worth retaining in whole or in part, or should it be given up?

The Monroe Doctrine sprang into being in response to two motive principles: a feeling of American intercontinental solidarity; and a concern for our own national defense. Whatever changes the Doctrine may have undergone in its application, these ideals continued to be, and still are, the foundation stones. The first of them, however, is gradually being taken over by Pan-Americanism, though the success of that institution is not yet as great as could be desired. The second is becoming less and less vital as the years wear on. At the present moment nothing less than a combination of European and Asiatic ene-

mies could hope to overthrow us in war. Admitting that the Caribbean area and the Pacific lands nearest the Canal would be a menace in the hands of a great power, it does not seem probable that there could be any danger to us from any enemy in southern South America. Furthermore, at least four of those countries are so well established and so punctiliously observant of their international obligations that they would offer slight excuse for anything but the most brutally wanton conquest, and it is not likely that our European brethren will be graceless enough for that. Come then to the first sentences in a new statement about the Monroe Doctrine which the writer could wish some Presidential Message might adopt:

The Monroe Doctrine was enunciated and has been sustained by this country out of a feeling of American intercontinental solidarity and as the cornerstone of our national defense. In view of the fact that in its present form it is not popular with large sections of the public in each of the Hispanic American republics and that its continuance is therefore detrimental to American business, it behooves us to make fitting modifications either in its application or in its terms. For the purposes of national defense we are indeed interested in the lands which are nearest to us and to the Panama Canal, but as regards happenings in the more southerly republics of South America we need from that standpoint have small concern. The United States might very well, therefore, abandon the Monroe Doctrine with respect to the last-named countries, while retaining it in so far as it relates to European or Asiatic aggressions in the rest.

The republics which might thus be left out of the fold would be, probably, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. Ecuador (because of its strategic position with respect to the Canal) would be retained with Mexico, Central America, northern South America, and the West Indian islands, within the purview of the Doctrine.

Here, if merely our own narrowly national interests were to be considered, the new presidential message might stop, though it would then be necessary to omit the first sentence given above, or else leave the "intercontinental solidarity" swinging uncomfortably in the air. Few of us, however, would be will-

ing so lightly to abandon a national ideal which most of us believe has been, on the whole, beneficent. Furthermore, it seems almost like treachery to the occasional friend we have had in the southern republics who has dared to defend us and even to proclaim the Monroe Doctrine. What, for example, would we say to President Brum of Uruguay who recently made a remarkable statement in favor of the Doctrine? On June 18, 1917, the President of Uruguay (influenced by Brum who was not then President) issued a decree to the effect that an offense against one American nation should be considered an offense against all and that Uruguay would not treat as a belligerent any sister American state so attacked. Thus did Uruguay put herself unreservedly on the side of the United States during the war. Early in 1920 Señor Brum, now President, defined his position in course of an address on international law. He asserted that all American countries, including the United States, should hold it as an attack upon each when some non-American country should give offense to any one of them, and should take joint action against such aggression. In one of the strongest arguments ever made, he pointed out clearly how the United States had saved Hispanic America, not only recently against Germany, but also in the past. He then went on to urge the embodiment of a somewhat expanded and clarified Monroe Doctrine in the constitution of a League of American Nations, which might exist without prejudice to a world League. In this document the bugaboo of United States' aggressions was to be definitely exorcised. He also spoke of American solidarity in any League of Nations of the world. Let us then proceed with the Presidential Message:

It is neither the wish nor the intention of this government to abandon the ideal of intercontinental solidarity with respect to the southern republics of South America. Indeed, the United States may very well offer to embody the principles of the Monroe Doctrine in treaties with those countries, along the lines recently suggested by President Brum of Uruguay.

Perhaps this is the point where wise statesmanship should stop. Unforeseen circumstances may compel us, like the Eng-

lishman in Mesopotamia, to be under the "lamentable necessity" of doing our "duty to mankind" in some of the nearer republics of Hispanic America. The question is not easy to resolve. Some will say that self-determination is the only moral rule to apply. Others point out that an anarchic self-determination in fact injures others, just as a man who sets his own house on fire endangers the neighborhood. They also argue that the world has now become so small that none of its resources can afford to be wasted. There may indeed be two opinions on the moral code of imperialism, but there can be little doubt that the national advantages in a career of conquest are altogether outweighed by the disadvantages. During more than a century of our national life we scarcely so much as thought in terms of imperialism, except by way of an offshoot from our own domestic politics. In 1898 we made our bow in world affairs, and then for a time many of us were temporarily attracted by the glamor of conquest. But, as history goes, the dream lasted but a moment. The American people rushed into the Great War without a thought of advantage to themselves, and came out with unsullied hands, where they might have taken almost anything they wished. Nay more, we all know that there was for a time a distinct feeling of dissatisfaction with our allies, precisely on the ground that each and every one had yielded to the temptation of imperialism. Would it not then be worth while to consider a further addition to our Presidential Message?

With respect to the other countries still included as within the sphere of the Monroe Doctrine, it is the desire of the United States that they alone shall determine their fate as sovereign peoples. The United States should welcome them too to such a League of American Nations as President Brum suggests. Thus the fear of certain Spanish Americans that the Monroe Doctrine is in reality a weapon against themselves should then be dissipated. The time has not come, however, when the interests of our national defense could be turned over to a league which has yet to be put on trial. It will therefore be necessary for this government to retain its traditional principles with respect to the area mentioned, in its own defense against the non-American powers.

What would be the effect? In southern South America the first reaction would be one of surprise; among certain youthful internationalists and literary dilettantes there would be something akin to regret at seeing their silly predictions of an aggressive American use of the Monroe Doctrine thus come to naught. There would be no immediate rush to make the offered treaty, but, sooner or later, common sense would prevail, and southern South America would come into the fold, led perhaps by Uruguay. In the countries nearer to us, there certainly would be a temporary outcry if the last paragraph in the proposed message were not included—no worse, however, than is already chronic. With that paragraph included, some of them would still cry out, but their governments would enter the League sooner perhaps than some of those farther south, if only to avoid losing certain advantages with respect to one another. The League in origin would not be a strong, whole-hearted organization, but in course of time it might become so. Then *and then only* could we abandon the Monroe Doctrine in entirety.

In conclusion, then, let us set forth the "Message" as a whole.

The Monroe Doctrine was enunciated and has been sustained by this country out of a feeling of American intercontinental solidarity and as the cornerstone of our national defense. In view of the fact that in its present form it is not popular with large sections of the public in each of the Hispanic American republics and that its continuance is therefore detrimental to American business, it behooves us to make fitting modifications either in its application or in its terms. For the purposes of national defense we are indeed interested in the lands which are nearest to us and to the Panama Canal, but as regards happenings in the more southerly republics of South America we need from that standpoint have small concern. The United States might very well, therefore, abandon the Monroe Doctrine with respect to the last-named countries, while retaining it in so far as it relates to European or Asiatic aggressions in the rest.

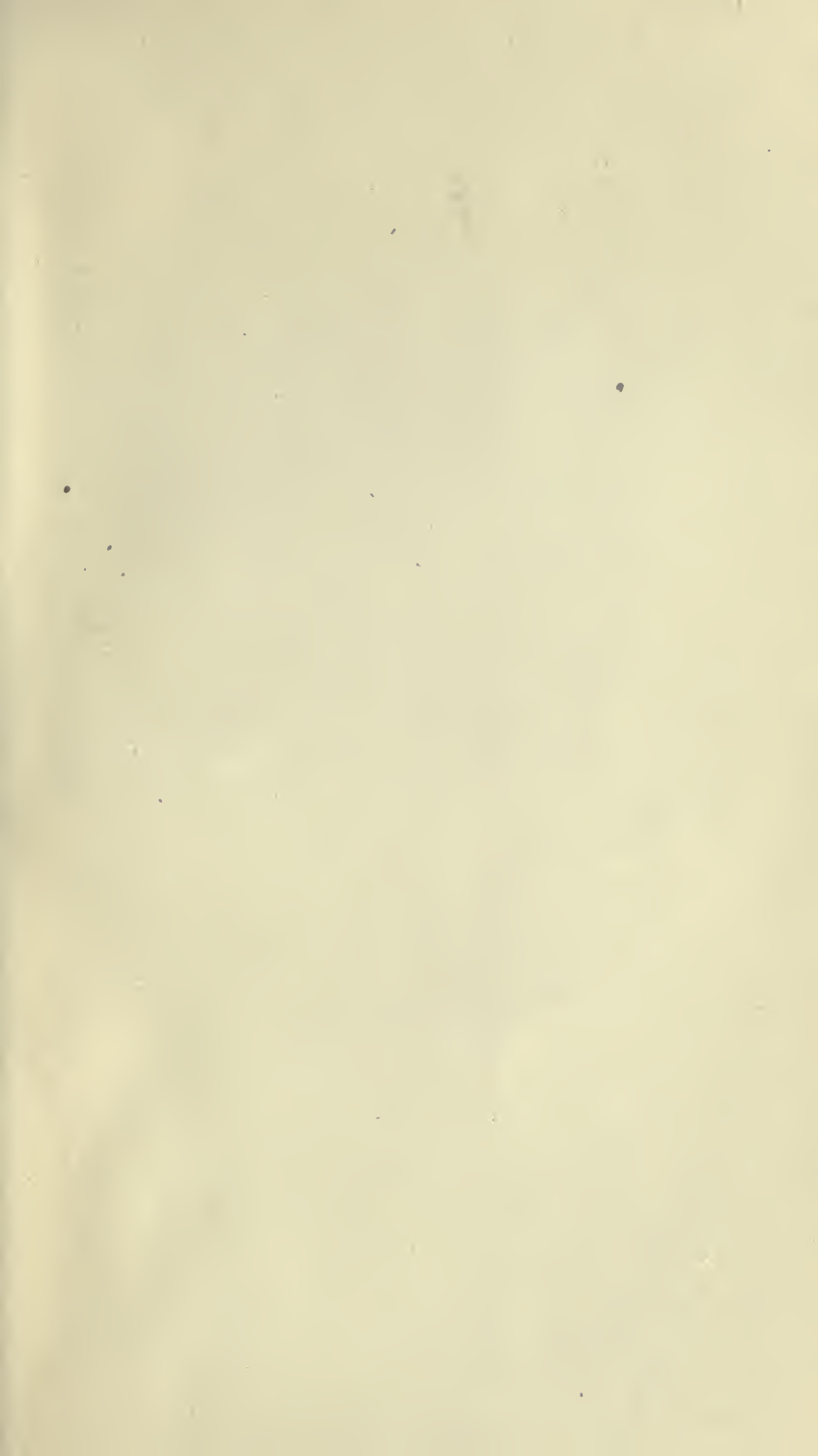
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CHARLES E. CHAPMAN.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.





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